

Don't BLOW

Your Career

Photo and design by TSgt. James B. Pritchett

Gulf Wing Features

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Editor

A 403rd Wing Airman ended his Air Force Reserve career Nov. 1 as a result of illegal use of a controlled substance.

The Airman, assigned for training to the 361st Training Squadron, Detachment 2 at Pensacola Naval Air Station, tested positive during random drug testing for cocaine in March.

He was court-martialed at Sheppard Air Force Base receiving a bad conduct discharge and two months confinement he served there. Upon release, he was brought back to the 403rd Wing for outprocessing.

"Reservists are a part of the Air Force and will be dealt with as members of the Air Force," said Maj. David Rose, deputy staff judge advocate for the 403rd Wing. "Reservists may not be aware that they can be brought back on active duty if they test positive for drug abuse during a period of active duty."

Penalties for drug abuse for Reservists range from administrative discharge and confinement to loss of pay and reductions in rank.

According to Major Rose, people convicted with lesser drug-related crimes can be sentenced to forfeiture of all pay and allowances and confinement up to five years.

Those convicted of serious drug-related crimes such as distribution face up to 15 years confinement as well.

A bad conduct or general discharge also await those who are proved drug abusers.

"The Air Force adheres to a strict 'zero tolerance' policy," said Major Rose, "and I can assure you the wing commander will not tolerate drug abuse in this unit."

New programs began in



Photo Illustration by SSGT. J. Justin Pearce

Airmen discharged due to drug abuse can find themselves with limited career choices in the civilian sector.

October to enhance screening processes used to identify drug abusers.

Changes to the Air Force's drug testing program include more testing for those most likely to use illegal drugs or abuse legal drugs.

The Air Force began its "Smart Testing" program Oct. 1. Under the program, individuals in the group shown to most likely use illicit drugs are tested at a higher frequency than the rest of the population. That target group includes those in the ranks of airman basic through senior airman and first and second lieutenants.

As a component of Smart Testing, the Air Force will increase the number of random drug tests it performs on the target group to equal

the number of people in the group. People who fall into this group can expect to be called for random testing at a much more frequent rate.

In addition, Airmen who attend training can expect to be tested at some point, according to Major Rose.

The process of random urinalysis starts with selection. Using software that has a listing of all the Airmen who are subject to drug testing, the program generates a random list based on the number of tests the unit will run on a given day.

Once a name is selected, it is immediately put back into the system. Because names are put back into the system and because they are drawn randomly, individuals cannot predict when they will be tested, or how

many times they will be tested during the year.

Tests are 100 percent accurate, said Senior Master Sgt. Claudia Bruffy, Drug Demand Reduction Program manager for the 403rd Wing. Several precautions in the system prevent errors.

"When samples are collected, an Airman verifies several times that his or her bottle has the correct social security number and that it has not been tampered with. Each Airmen signs a form stating that the sample taken is their sample. The bottle is sealed in the Airman's presence, and a strict chain of custody is followed after that," said Sergeant Bruffy.

Samples are tested for marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, methamphetamines, barbiturates, hallucinogens, ecstasy and date-rape drugs. The lab can also test for steroids, if required.

"Marijuana is the drug most commonly found in military members, followed by cocaine," she said.

Sergeant Bruffy said the Drug Demand Reduction Program was implemented to help maintain a fit and ready military and a drug-free Air Force community.

"We work to keep illicit drug use down through a combination of education, deterrence, and detection," she said.

One thing the DDRP is not short on is information. Briefings and a wealth of literature including videos is available for anyone concerned about substance abuse and prevention. With limited resources available to Reservists, it is up to each individual to resist temptation.

Bruffy said the number of wing members who have tested positive remains low.

One former Airman's mistake serves as a reminder to everyone not to let drugs blow your career.